

Review of Albuquerque, NM

In this issue we continue our journey around the southwest loop. (See “Southwest Loop”, *Vance Jackson Views*, November 2008.)

Continuing north on highway 285 from Roswell, NM, we turn west on I-40 and continue into Albuquerque. I've visited Albuquerque many times and it has an amazing variety of sights to see.

One sight you should not miss is Petroglyph National Monument. It is located on Unser Blvd a few miles north of I-40. (See <http://www.nps.gov/petr/>) Petroglyphs are ancient drawings made by scratching off the outer layer of buildup from the rocks. The

monument contains thousands of these drawings, many along the walls of a valley believed to have been where shepherds kept their animals. Naturally scientists have ascribed religious and cultural significance to these drawings. Frankly I think they are the natural result of sending bored teenage boys out to watch the sheep! So they may be an ancient version of modern day tagging. But if I am correct, they would consist of references to girls, sex, food, sex, girls and the occasional derogatory statement about whoever sent them there!



But, that's enough of my harebrained ideas. They are truly fascinating to see. Many are accessible via walking trails, and while I wouldn't call it a difficult climb, it sure isn't for everyone. I highly advise a good pair of sneakers or hiking boots as the footing at times is uneven. Around the area of the monument there are several very old, extinct volcano cones and much of the area appears to be ancient lava flows. The sight of housing all around the area with these lava flows is rather surreal.

The second site you shouldn't miss is the National Museum of Nuclear Science & History, formerly the National Atomic Museum, located at 601 Eubank Blvd SE. (See <http://www.nuclearmuseum.org/>) Be careful

if you search for the museum by name in your GPS as its location may be mismarked as mine was. The street address worked fine though. This museum contains tons of information about the history and development of nuclear energy and covers electricity generation through weapons. One of the best exhibits is a movie detailing the development of the first nuclear weapons. I had feared it would have been very



anti-military but it provided a balanced and very interesting perspective on the development and use of the first nuclear weapons. It made a tremendous impact on my children and opened up a good opportunity for a dialogue with them about the realities of war at that time. There were also a lot of hands-on, kid friendly exhibits and experiments.

If you happen to visit Albuquerque the first week in October each year you will be treated to a tremendous sight: hundreds of hot air balloons floating freely over the earth during the annual Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta. People come from around the world to participate or just take in the spectacle. I've only seen pictures but have promised myself to try to get there at least once.

Another thing my family enjoyed was driving old Route 66 which passes through downtown Albuquerque. Some of the original road art is still visible enticing the traveler to stop and shop their wares. Adjacent to Hwy 66 downtown, there's a very nice artsy shopping area with tons of souvenir shops from which to buy your mementos.

One word of caution while dining in Albuquerque. The people there are very fond of their green chili. If the growing season was mild, the chilis have a wonderful flavor. But if they get stressed, they get hot! My favorite restaurant is El Pinto located at 10500 4th St NW. Take I-25 North, exit at Tramway Rd, turn left onto Roy Ave, follow and turn left onto 4th St NW. Just around the bend you'll see the entrance. This restaurant is a converted old hacienda and the architecture alone makes the trip worthwhile, let alone the food!

There are a couple of other things to fit in if you have some extra time. Albuquerque hosts a tram to the top of a mountain overlooking the city and the view is spectacular. Along Tramway Road, you will also find a nice casino where you can find some good food and gaming if you choose to partake.

The city of Albuquerque is a very nice stop along Interstate 40 in the southwest. I recommend taking the time to stop and see the sights if you're passing that way!

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